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Honors Humanities

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Semester Reading Response 2

The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde

Pages 76-132

**Summary:**

This section of the novel was a continuation of the relationship between Dorian Gray and Sibyl Vane. Their relationship was one that fluctuated greatly, and the influence of friends and family helped the matter little. Overtime Dorian Gray became more and more obsessed with Sibyl and had to see her, without gazing at her magnificent beauty on the stage, Dorian appeared to go mad. This was a reoccurring theme until one night Sibyl Vane performed so terribly that Harry and Basil asked Dorian to leave and not dwell on one dreadful performance. Dorian could not resist staying there to see how awful the act truly was.

As the curtains fell Dorian rushed back to see Sibyl and demand an explanation as to why her acting was so disgraceful. She simply replied that she has found love, and the only reason her acting was heavenly before was because she did not know how it felt to love. She exclaimed that not possessing true love allowed her to “pretend” to be those character, her dreams of love became reality when she entered the stage. Without the need to imagine what it was like to be in love she found the stage to be a cheap, worthless, and pointless way of entertaining people. Dorian found this to be completely absurd and told Sibyl never to speak with him again, and that he would never be seen watching another play she was in. He also was adamant about the fact that he no longer loved her, and could never love someone like her. He went on and on about what a fool he had been to love someone like her, and in the process made himself look like a major jerk. Sibyl couldn’t handle the rejection and ended up committing suicide.

During this portion of the novel Dorian Gray starts to see changes in the photograph that Basil painted of him. It appears to transform into a new picture as emotionally Dorian begins to dwindle. As feelings of regret, concern, loss take over Dorian sees more and more changes in the portrait. Once he finds out about Sibyl’s suicide, he is torn between how to feel. Harry ends up making a decision for him, Basil must ignore it, pretend that nothing has happened, and continue to live life normally. Basil does not agree with this, and thinks Dorian to be delusional or in emotional pain. The story ends as Basil tells Dorian about how much emotion he puts into the portraits of Dorian, and how he knows that the expression on these portraits transform over time.

**Analysis:**

I was a bit confused at the beginning of this section, but shortly found the answers to my confusion. The book has drawn me in; it’s almost as if I am the characters. I feel their pain, sense their fears, and experience the lives they live. The strangest part of this section was that the picture kept changing expressions, and it kind of freaked me out. Overall I have learned more about the characters thoughts, feelings, and actions, this should help me develop/ infer what will happen next. I am excited to find out what more happens in the story as well as follow the growth of the characters.

**Application:**

When looking at the essential questions; understanding human nature, human roles and behaviors, and human ideas, the characters can be prime examples of how these are applied to “everyday life.” Human nature can be seen in the thoughts and actions of the characters. Human roles are seen in the social standings of the characters as well as their relationships with one another. Human ideas can be seen throughout the actions and thoughts of the characters. The essential questions are developed quite nicely through the plot and storyline of the novel.

Human nature is primarily shown when throughout the section Dorian constantly checks to see if the portrait has been altered. He is fearful of the reasoning behind this and is also skeptical that it is even happening. Human nature can also be seen when Dorian flips out on Sibyl after her terrible acting, stating that she “killed his love” (page 102). He later tells her “I am going,… I don’t wish to be unkind, but I can’t see you again. You have disappointed me” (page 103). He is genuine in his apology, yet continues to break her heart, and that is the human nature aspect of this example. Even though Sibyl is clearly distressed by this, Dorian continues to end their relationship. Human nature can also be seen when Sibyl Vane thinks that her world is ending because Dorian tells her that he no longer loves her.

Human roles are shown in the social standing of Lord Henry, Basil, and Dorian. Lord Henry and Dorian Gray are always invited to engagements, whereas Basil is rarely ever invited to parties and celebrations. In this section of the novel Dorian Gray and Harry become closer friends, and are nearly inseprable. Dorian told Harry that he “explained him to himself” (page 118). Harry was actually the person that came to Dorian first about Sibyl’s suicide, and was his “support,” without Harry, Dorian would probably be in a permanent state of depression. As you can see the human roles in this story are extremely important to the growth and development of the characters.

Human ideas are mainly shown through the thoughts of the characters, but also minutely through the actions of the characters. The main idea that Harry portrays to Dorian is that “(Sibyl) she had died for love of him (Dorian), and love would always be a sacrifice she had made of her life” (page 119). This basic idea was what made Dorian magically get over Sibyl’s death, without it he wouldn’t know what to do with himself. This simple thought, along with others created relationships/bonds between characters, and allowed the plotline to continue to grow. Human ideas (even simple ones), can plant new ideas into other character’s minds. These new ideas spread like viruses until finally everything becomes a blur. Other examples of human ideas include Basils opinion that Dorian should go and visit Sibyl’s mother to ensure that the family is doing alright, as well as Dorian’s obsession with the portrait and its frequent changes.